

Ochoco Wild and Free Roaming Horse Herd Management Plan Project

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated April 2020

What is this project?

This is an effort to revise the herd management plan for the Big Summit Wild Horse Territory¹. The Forest Service is creating an environmental assessment (EA) that will consider the effects of different courses of action before ultimately choosing the best approach. This EA will inform the creation of a new herd management plan for the Big Summit Wild Horse Territory.

Why are you updating the herd management plan?

The current herd management plan was written in 1975 and it prescribes a range of 55 to 65 wild horses on the Big Summit Territory as an appropriate management level. The management plan was created following a 1975 environmental assessment of the wild horses and their territory. Recent surveys estimate at least 135 horses living within and surrounding the territory at any given time. Many of the tools currently available for the management of wild horses were not included in the 1975 plan. The Forest Service needs an updated management plan based on today's conditions, available tools, and latest science.

What all is included in the management plan?

The updated management plan will include an appropriate management level for the herd size based on current conditions and best available science, as well as updated protocols for monitoring the size and health of the herd, population control, off-range management, and other methods for managing the health and vitality of the herd.

How is the public involved?

The NEPA process provides for public involvement opportunities. A 30-day scoping period was provided in the summer of 2017 when the Forest Service announced they would undertake this planning process. A 30-day public comment period will be provided when the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) is ready for review. Additionally, the Forest Service worked with COIC in 2015 to host a working group that helped to highlight key issues and information gaps for the Forest Service planners, and then also worked with COIC in 2018 to host a "sound board" group of diverse interests who came together to provide feedback on specific aspects of a wild horse management plan.

¹ Forest Service Manual 2260 refers to "Territorial Plans." This EA uses Herd Management Plan and Territorial Plan interchangeably.

What is the timeline for this effort?

- Initial project scoping occurred: June 21-July 21, 2017
- Draft EA release expected: April 2020
- Final EA and Decision Notice expected: Summer 2020

What are the Forest Service responsibilities for managing wild horses?

The Forest Service is mandated to manage wild horses in accordance with the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971. This Act requires the Secretary of Agriculture to protect unbranded and unclaimed horses residing on public lands, to manage them "as components of the public lands," and "in a manner that is designed to achieve and maintain a thriving natural ecological balance on the public lands."

Where can I find more information on this planning effort?

Link to the planning documents: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=46228>

Sign up to receive project notifications:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/ochoco/landmanagement/projects>

Big Summit Wild Horse Territory home page:

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ochoco/specialplaces/?cid=fseprd488281>

Forest Service Wild Horse and Burro Program: <https://www.fs.fed.us/wild-horse-burro>